Land Under Cultivation

758. SHRI SURESH PRABHU : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) the total arable land brought under cultivation in the country;

(b) the potential to bring more land under cultivation;

(c) the value lost due to non-cultivation of such land; and

(d) the steps proposed in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) As per the land use statistics the total arable land was 166.07 million hectares for 1992-93 (latest available) i.e. higher by 19.20 million hectares over the arable land of 146.87 million hectares in 1950-51.

(b) The available culturable waste land (14.6 million hectares) has the potential for being brought under cultivation.

(c) No assessment about the value lost due to non-cultivation of such land has ever been made.

(d) It has been the endeavour of the Government to bring more area under cultivation through reclamation of culturable waste land and programme of afforestation and conservation.

Jail Inmates Allegedly Hacked

759. SHRI JAI PRAKASH (HARDOI) : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item titled "three Tihar inmates hacked off cell-mate's thumb", appearing in the 'Indian Express', dated October 11, 1996;

(b) whether the three inmates allegedly hacked off the thumbs of their cell-mate on the night of October 7, 1996 and flushed the same down the toilet;

(c) if so, whether the matter has been investigated and the culprits apprehended; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d). The three accused inmates are reported to have initially claimed that both the severed thumbs were flushed off in the toilet but later on severed thumb was recovered from outside the periphery area of the Jail boundary. A criminal case has already been registered against the three accused inmates. The Jail authorities have also placed two Jail officials under suspension for alleged negligence of duty and departmental proceedings have been initiated against 5 officials including the two officials placed under suspension.

New Techniques for Agriculture Sector

760. SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government emphasised the need to make available modern technology to the farmers in remote areas and inaccessible areas to improve the production and to find opportunities for marketing their products to increase their income;

(b) if so, whether the Government have also called the agricultural scientists to take up the evolving appropriate technology needed by the small producers for enhancing their productivity, production and income;

(c) if so, whether any guidelines have been issued by the Government in this regard;

(d) if so the details thereof; and

(e) the extent to which the farming technology is likely to be upgraded during 1996 and onwards?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d). In our meetings with the scientists, emphasis is being laid on evolving appropriate technologies by the scientists which are further assessed and refined through adaptive trials to meet the requirements of farming community including small farmers. Guidelines have not been issued.

(e) Technology upgradation is a continuous process based on the feed-back and location specific needs of a particular area/region.

Private Investment in Farm Sector

761. KUMARI SUSHILA TIRIYA : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to allow large private investment in the farm sector; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) and (b). There are no restrictions on private sector investment in agriculture. In fact, the Government is encouraging private investment in the farm sector by improving infrastructural facilities and credit support and creating a favourable price and trade regime.